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AUTHOR Dervin, Brenda; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine how library users in California say library use helps them. While most library effectiveness studies infer effectiveness by looking at the movement of materials or reports of user satisfaction, this study proceeds from the assumption that libraries need to know how library use helps in user terms. The study design is drawn from a general research approach, developed over the past 13 years and known as Sense-Making, which provides a general perspective and set of methods for looking at information seeking and use in human rather than institutional terms. The central focus of this study is a set of 16 "helps" users obtain from their library visits. The study was directed toward two specific purposes: to examine the kinds of helps users generally got from their most recent library visits and to determine the dimensions that predicted how users were helped--kind of library, recency of visit, materials/services obtained, or demographic characteristics. A questionnaire drawn from methods developed and tested in past Sense-Making projects was administered by telephone to a random probability sample of all individuals aged 12 or older residing in California. The procedures resulted in a sample of 1,005 Californians of which 81% (814) recalled their last library visit and were included in the final user sample. This report includes sections on the purpose and methodology of the study, helps which the users reported, factors which predicted how users were helped, the best predictors of how libraries helped, composite user portraits for each help, and conclusions. Bar charts throughout the report illustrate the survey findings. (THC).

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FORWARD

For generations libraries have brought people together with the books and information they needed. Today libraries are called upon to provide an ever expanding role. The traditional role of collecting, organizing, and preserving the record of mankind is still valid. But, libraries do much more. In addition to printed materials, libraries collect records, videotapes, and art reproductions. They provide public programming, typewriters, photocopy machines, and meeting rooms. Librarians answer reference questions, tell stories to children and some provide tutoring for those who cannot read. Others serve as community information and referral resources. All libraries, however, have one common objective -- to help people.

While the results of this study may not be news to those who work in libraries every day, it does document for the first time the helping role of the library. It is hoped that this information will shed a different light on the value of the library in society. Libraries are struggling to survive and to continue to give the help that they are expected to provide.

If we better understand this role, we can more effectively communicate the value of library service to those who fund and use libraries.

The California State Library is committed to the improvement and development of quality library and information services for all Californians. The Library will continue to work toward a clearer understanding of the information needs of Californians and of the help that libraries provide.

GARY E. STRONG
California State Librarian

PURPOSE

In its least complex statement, the purpose of this study was to answer a simple question:

How do library users say library use helps them?

In its most complex form understanding the purpose of this study requires understanding that the question asked has rarely been asked before in the form it takes here.

The reason for this is that the traditional and widely accepted approaches to assessing library effectiveness assume that the help provided by a library (or any information system) can be defined as the library sees it -- as the transfer of materials and services from library to users.

Most library effectiveness studies infer effectiveness simply by looking at the movement of materials. Measuring the number of books circulated is an example of this kind of measure, typically called "an input-output measure." Sometimes, studies also report interviews with users in what are usually called "user satisfaction" studies. Typical questions ask users if they got the materials they wanted and how satisfied they were with the service provided. Users are often asked as well which of a list of possible services they would like to see their library provide.

All of these approaches look at the user through the "eyes of the "system" -- they match the user to something the system is interested in. They assume that the delivery of concrete materials and services is the delivery of help.

There is nothing fundamentally wrong with current approaches to assessing library effectiveness. Libraries need to know input-output statistics (e.g. budget allocations by book categories compared to circulation). Libraries also need to know if users got the specific materials or services they came for and whether users want to see particular services added. This study, however, assumes that libraries need to know something else as well.

The something else is knowing how library use helps in user terms. The something else is allowing the user to say what he/she did with the materials/services the library provided. The something else is linking library service to the world outside the library, the world of living day to day, the world where, indeed, the materials/services the library provides are put into use.

This, then, is the purpose of this study. The specific study design is drawn from a general research approach called "Sense-Making" developed by Dervin and her colleagues over the past 13 years. This approach provides a general perspective and set of methods for looking at information seeking and use in human rather than institutional terms.

The approach starts with a core set of premises. For purposes of this study, the important ones are:

* Information system use is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

* Any concrete library material or service can be put to different uses depending on the user's situation.

* Information system use can be usefully studied by looking at how people see the use as facilitating their own movements through their own lives.

Translating these premises into this study required first that the study ask users not merely whether they got the concrete services or materials they they came for but how the visit specifically helped them in the context of their lives. In essence, the study needed to ask users what they did with the materials/services provided. It did not assume that certain groups of users (e.g. low income users) always are helped in the same way. Nor did it assume that certain kinds of materials (e.g. fiction) or certain contexts of use (e.g. job-related use) always lead to the same ends. In essence, the premises required this study to look at how users constructed their own sense of their library visits.

The central focus of this study is on the helps user obtain from their library visits. A set of helps seen in human rather than institutional terms have been developed in the some 45 Sense-Making studies done to date. They all rest on the core idea that an intersection with an institution or with an information resource is a means to an end. The end is movement through one's own life in whatever direction and to whatever end the user is pointed. Since all human movement is propelled by individual minds,

(1) **GOT IDEAS AND UNDERSTANDINGS**

is a central way of being helped.

But ideas and understandings are rarely ends in themselves. People need to move toward things either in their heads or physically through time and space. This requires planning. So another help is:

(2) **PLANNED, DECIDED WHAT, WHEN, WHERE.**

Getting to places sometimes requires getting new skills -- another help:

(3) **GOT SKILLS NEEDED TO DO SOMETHING.**

Sometimes a journey has already been started and what the person wants as help is to have:

(4) **ACCOMPLISHED OR FINISHED SOMETHING.**

Sometimes the journey has started but there is a danger of falling off the road and the help sought is:

(5) **KEPT GOING WHEN IT SEEMED HARD.**

Sometimes the journey is planned but there's trouble getting started and the appropriate help is:

(6) **GOT STARTED OR MOTIVATED.**

Sometimes the journey is either planned or underway but the person has lost confidence and wants:

(7) **GOT CONFIRMATION THAT I WAS DOING THE RIGHT THING.**

Sometimes there is danger either to avoid or get out of and the help needed is:

(8) **GOT OUT OF OR AVOIDED A BAD SITUATION.**

Sometimes bad situations can't be avoided and the needed helps are:

(9) **CALMED DOWN OR EASED WORRIES**, or
(10) **TOOK MIND OFF THINGS**, or
(11) **FELT REASSURED OR HOPEFUL**, or
(12) **FELT GOOD ABOUT SELF.**

And, being human, the helps sought sometimes are:

(13) **RESTED OR RELAXED**, or
(14) **GOT HAPPINESS OR PLEASURE.**

Also, being human, people need other people -- both because people in other networks have access to different and useful ideas and pictures of the world and also because making journeys alone, particularly difficult journeys, is a hard thing to do. So, sometimes the helps needed are:

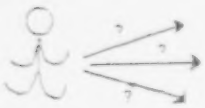
(15) **MADE CONTACT WITH OTHERS**, or
(16) **FELT CONNECTED OR NOT ALONE.**

This set of helps has been gleaned over the past 13 years from some 50,000 answers to questions like: How did this book (news article, TV show, contact with professional, visit to library, and so on) help you? The above set of categories are called "generic" helps in that they fit all human situations and yet can be studied in terms of their applicability to specific situations.

For some purposes, the 16 helps above can be grouped into categories to produce a smaller set of helps. This is possible because past studies have shown that certain of the helps are much more likely to be sought at the same time. These major categories of helps are illustrated below both pictorially and with examples of verbatim responses from the respondents in this study. The numbers in parentheses after each major help category name refer to whichever of the specific 16 helps listed above were incorporated into that major category. The procedure for incorporating more than one specific help into a major category was to ask whether a person cited one or more of the specific helps in the category.

GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS (1)

* I got a book on heart disease. My husband is in the hospital and it helped me understand it more.
* I was able to get books I didn't have to pay for so I could continue learning about rocks.



FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL (2,3,4,8)

* It helped with being a salesman.
* I got what I needed to do my floral arrangements.
* It helped me decide which appliances to buy.
* I learned how to talk to people, who to talk to, and who hires for my kind of work.
* Helped me not to make any mistakes during my pregnancy.

MADE CONTACT WITH OTHERS (15)

* I got addresses of some very old friends.
* I learned what agency to call for help.
* It was a convenient place to meet someone.
* I found a tutor for my math problem.
* I found an author I really like.

GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL (5,6,7,9,10,11,12)

* It gave me a wonderful feeling of accomplishment.
* It gave me the motivation to start.
* It encouraged me to keep going with my research.
* I was able to keep going despite the difficulty.
* It calmed me down and eased my alarm.
* Her kindness uplifted me.
* It helped me take my mind off things.
* It helped me to put things in a different light.
* It gave me a sense of hope and purpose.
* It confirmed my own thinking.
* It made me feel good about myself.

FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE (16)

* The friendly help made me feel like I belonged.
* It helped me keep in touch with my own culture.
* I got companionship with my grandchild.

GOT REST/RELAXATION (13)

* I relaxed with a good book.
* It was a quiet retreat from the world.
* I unwound from a long day.

GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE (14)

* The books entertained me.
* I really enjoy reading those kinds of things.
* I got a great deal of pleasure.
* It made me feel good to go there with my child.

In this study, the detailed set of helps were used in the questionnaire (as described in the section following on methods). This was done because past research has shown that even though certain kinds of helps group together there are no readily understandable terms that communicate to respondents all the different aspects of some of the major help categories.

For this study, library users were asked to describe their most recent visit to the library on the following dimensions:

* What kind of library was the visit to.
* How long ago did the visit occur.
* What materials or services were obtained.
* Which of the set of 16 helps listed above did the user get as a result of his/her library visit and the materials/services obtained on the visit.
* Which of all the helps obtained was most important.

The user was also asked to describe self on a set of demographic dimensions -- household size, income, education, sex, age, race, geographic residence.

The study was then directed toward two specific purposes:

The first was to examine what kinds of helps users got generally from their most recent library visits.

The second was to determine what dimensions predicted how users were helped -- kind of library? recency of visit? materials/services obtained? or, demographic characteristics?

---

[1]The Sense-Making approach is based on extensive analyses of the strengths and limitations of traditional measures of accountability used in library and information system as well as other human service arenas. For a full bibliography, write the senior author. Three starting references include:

Dervin, Brenda. "Useful theory for librarianship: communication, not information." DREXEL LIBRARY QUARTERLY 13, #3, 1977, pp. 16-32.

Dervin, Brenda. "Mass communicating: changing conceptions of the audience." In Rice, R. and W. Paisley, ed., PUBLIC COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981, pp. 71-87.

Dervin, Brenda, Tom Jacobson, and Michael Nilan. "Measuring aspects of information seeking: a test of a quantitative/qualitative methodology." In Burgoon, M., COMMUNICATION YEARBOOK 6. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982, pp. 419-445.

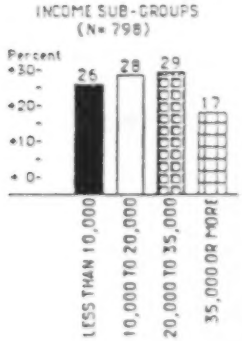
METHODS

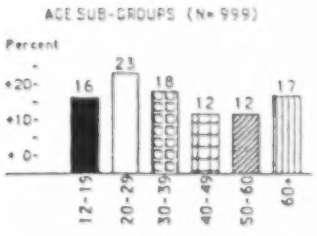
The questionnaire: The essential elements of the questionnaire were described above. The questionnaire was drawn from methods developed and tested in past Sense-Making projects and was specifically pre-tested twice for this application. The questionnaire took an average of about 10 minutes to administer.

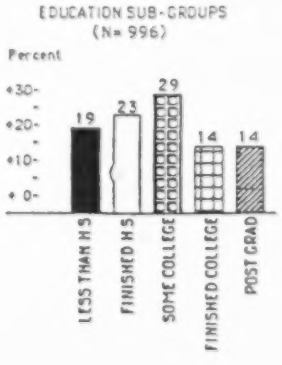
The sampling method: The sample was a random probability sample of all individuals aged 12 or older residing in the state of California. The sample was stratified by county.

The fielding: The questionnaire was administered by phone in the fall of 1984 by the selected survey company, Western Surveys & Research Company of Sacramento. A total of three calls was made in an attempt to get an interview at each sampled household. In choosing the person to interview in a household, the well-tested random procedure called the "next birthday" method was used. Using this method, the interviewer asked to interview the person aged 12 or older currently at home whose birthday was next.

The obtained sample: The procedures resulted in a sample of 1005 Californians. The graphs below show the percentage of the obtained sample of 1005 individuals who fell into sub-groups in terms of age, income, education, sex, race, household size, # of children in household, and geographic location. The number of respondents is less than 1005 for some graphs because of usual levels of respondent refusals to provide information. A comparison of the sample distributions with those of the 1980 census showed that the sample represented the population as well as the usual random survey. As is typical of all surveys except very high cost surveys which build in unusually large numbers of callbacks, the sample underrepresented lower income, less educated, male, and Hispanic respondents. In no case, however, was a sub-group so misrepresented that statistical comparisons could not made be made. In addition, an analysis was done to see what impact the underepresentations had on the final estimates of what percentage of the population cited each of the 16 helps. In this analysis, underrepresented groups were weighted in recalculations in proportion to their representation in the population. Results showed that weighted and unweighted percentages never differed from each other beyond differences that would be expected with normal sampling variations.







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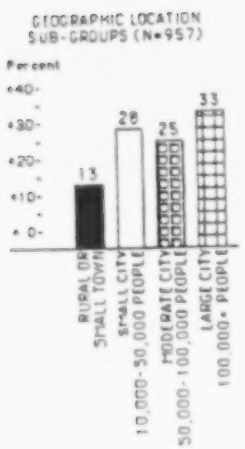
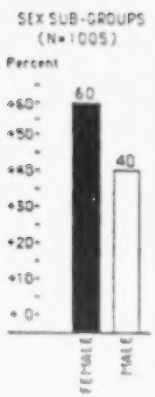
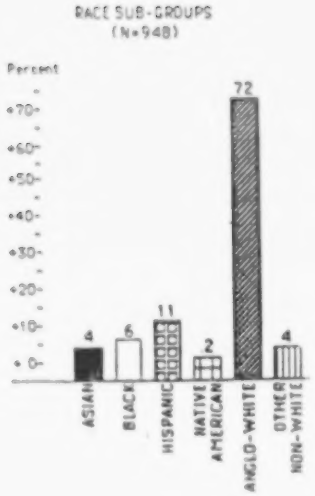
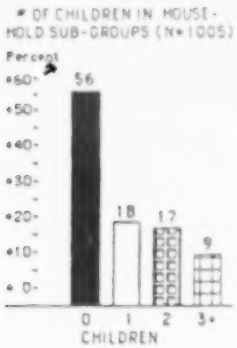
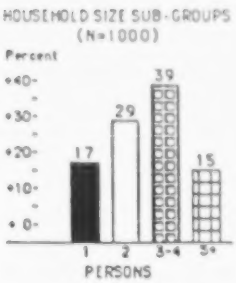










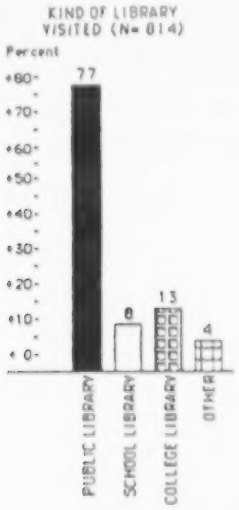
The library users in the sample: This study's design requires a sample of library users. For this purpose, only those individuals in the sample who were able to recall the last time they used a library were included in the study. In all, 81% of the 1005 sampled individuals recalled a last library use. An analysis of the demographic characteristics of the recallers and non-recallers showed patterns typical of past studies. The persons who recalled a last use were statistically more likely to be more educated, younger, from a larger household, and from a household with children. In most cases, the percentage of individuals in a sub-group who recalled or did not recall did not veer away from the 81% average by more than 7%. There were a few exceptions: only 58% of those 65 or older recalled; only 66% of those with household incomes under $10,000; only 72% of Hispanics; and only 71% of respondents in one-person households. The one sub-group markedly more likely to recall than all others were those with 17 years or more of education -- 96% recalled their last library visit.

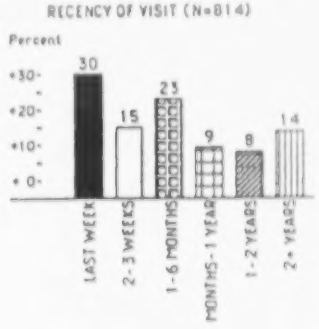
The final user sample: The final sample for this study, then, included the 81% of the 1005 individuals interviewed who recalled their last library visit. The sample n was 814. The n for specific analyses fell below this whenever a particular variable had missing data cases caused by usual respondent refusals to disclose information on some dimensions. Throughout this report, the number of cases on which a given finding is based is reported along with the results.

The sample of 814 users was asked to describe their most recent library visit in terms of the kind of library they visited, the recency of the visit, the context which led them to make the visit, and the materials/-services they obtained. The results were as follows:

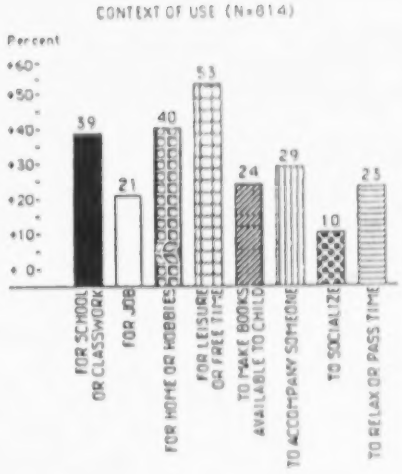
Kind of library: Most users (about 3/4th) reported a public library visit. The rest reported visits to college and school libraries and other kinds of libraries.

Recency of visit: Most users -- about 1/3rd -- reported a very recent visit, within the last week. Second most likely -- reported by almost 1/4th -- was a visit 1-6 months ago. The remaining users spread in percentages of 7 to 15% across other recency categories.

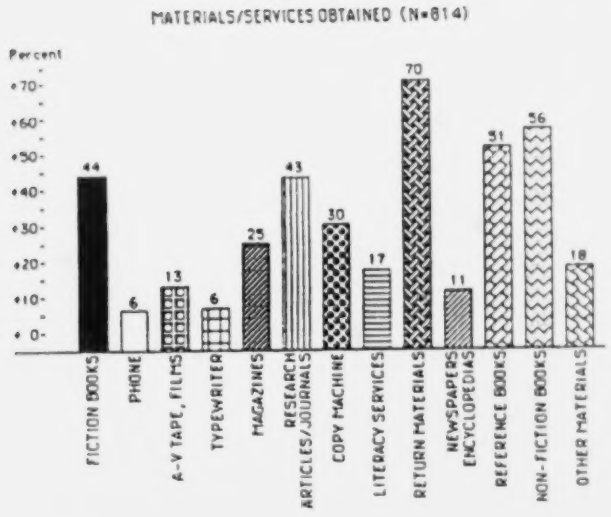




Context of use: From 10 to 53% of respondents said they went to the library for the eight different contexts provided. The eight contexts were all gleaned from prior library studies. The average respondent named 2.4 contexts. Most named -- by about half -- was FOR LEISURE OR FREE TIME. Least named -- by 1/10th -- was TO SOCIALIZE.



Materials/services obtained: Users were asked which of 13 different materials or services they obtained during their visit. The average user named 3.9. Most named was RETURNING MATERIALS (by almost 3/4th). About half named getting NON-FICTION BOOKS and ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND REFERENCE BOOKS. Almost half named getting FICTION BOOKS and RESEARCH ARTICLES AND JOURNALS. Percentages for the other kinds of materials/-services ranged from 6 to 30%.



Coding: Most of the questionnaire consisted of close-ended items where the respondent indicated to which category he/she belonged. The one exception was the verbal response to the question: "In your own words what was your most important help." These responses were coded using standard content analysis procedures.

Statistical analyses: Two different kinds of data presentations are used in this report.

> **Descriptive bar graphs:** In these analyses, the purpose is to show what percentage of the sample of users fell into each category.
>
> **Comparative bar graphs:** In these analyses, the purpose is to focus on the percentage of a sample sub-group that fell in a particular category in terms of how far it was above or below the average percentage across all sub-groups.

Throughout this report, each sub-group is compared statistically not to particular other sub-groups but rather to all other sub-groups. The question asked in doing the statistics was whether a given sub-group was distinctive. The statistical test used in all cases was the t-test comparing the percentage in the sub-group who named a particular factor to the percentage for all those not in the sub-group who named the same factor.

While this report provides references to statistical significance for interested readers, the data interpretations are not guided only by statistical significance. Rather, deviations from averages and differences between sub-groups of 8% of more were used as a general guideline for focusing attention on a finding. The reason for not using statistical significance per se was two-fold. The first reason was the ground-breaking aspects of this study -- it being the first attempt to look at how libraries help from a Sense-Making perspective. The second reason rested on the fact that significance is not only a product of how large a difference is found between sub-groups but also a product of how many respondents are in a sub-group and how close to 50% the obtained percentages are. Similarly large differences between two sub-groups with only 50 respondents each may not be

significant while those between two sub-groups with 200 respondents each would be. Or, a large difference between obtained percentages hovering around 80-90% might be significant while a similar difference between percentages hovering around 50% would not be.

Because of these characteristics of significance testing processes, it was decided that for this study it was important to unearth differences and consistent data trends regardless of statistical significance. For interested readers, references to statistical significance are made in two ways. First, a ** beside the title of a given table means that one or more sub-groups was significantly different from all others. A * next to the data for a given sub-group designated that that sub-group percentage was significantly different at $p<.05$ or beyond from the percentage obtained from all respondents not in that sub-group. Throughout this report, graphs are shown for all results regardless of whether the results reached statistical significance. This is done so readers can quickly survey the results using the pictorial presentations. In addition, readers who wish to will more readily be able to isolate data trends of special individual interest.

A second way in which significance is incorporated into the report is in language. A statistically significant finding is referred to as such. A trend without significance is referred to as a trend or referred to by terms such as "somewhat likely."

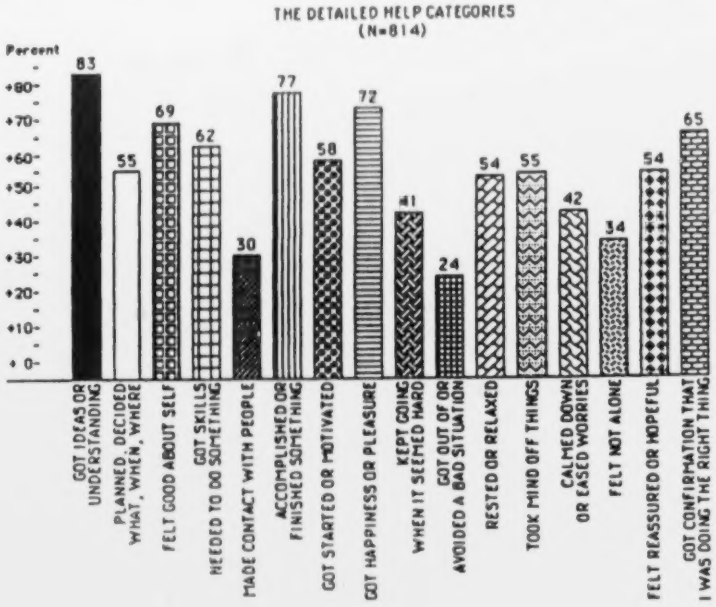
In addition to the statistical procedures described above, this study also used a statistical procedure called Multiple Regression in order to compare the explanatory power of different classes of variables in predicting what helps users named. The approach used was an approach usually referred to as a power analysis. Done by computer, the most powerful variable in predicting a help was entered into the equation first. Then, the computer reassesses all the variables looking for the one that if added next would add the most explanation over and above the first variable entered. This procedure then continues until all variables are entered from most powerful to least.

WHAT HELPS DID THE USERS REPORT GETTING FROM LIBRARY VISITS?

* On the average, the users reported getting 8 of the 16 specific helps from their most recent library visit. Percentages for given helps ranged from 24 to 83%.

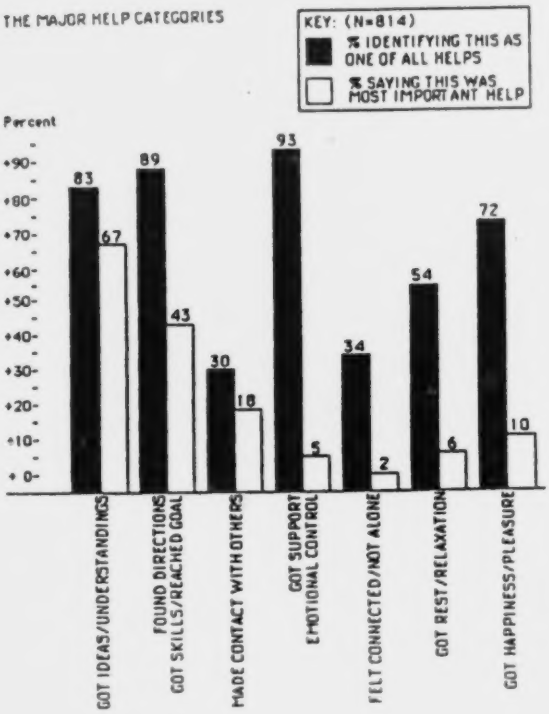
* Most named helps (by 65% or more) included: GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS; FELT GOOD ABOUT SELF; ACCOMPLISHED OR FINISHED SOMETHING; GOT HAPPINESS OR PLEASURE; AND GOT CONFIRMATION THAT I WAS DOING THE RIGHT THING.

* Least named helps (by 42% or less) included: MADE CONTACT WITH PEOPLE; KEPT GOING WHEN IT SEEMED HARD; GOT OUT OF OR AVOIDED A BAD SITUATION; CALMED DOWN OR EASED WORRIES; FELT NOT ALONE.



* When the 16 helps were combined into a set of 7 major helps, results showed that helps relating to emotional and planning dimensions were more frequently named than those relating to other dimensions. Slightly more than 90% said they GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL from their last library visit. This was followed by 89% who said they FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/-REACHED GOAL. In order of frequency the data showed: 83% for GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS; 72% for GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE; 54% for GOT REST/RELAXATION; and 30-34% for MADE CONTACT WITH OTHERS and FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE.

* A comparison was made of the frequency with which the 7 major help categories were named as one of all helps obtained versus the frequency with which they named as most important helps. Results showed that respondent statements of their most important helps mirrored generally accepted ideas of what services libraries provide. The most im-



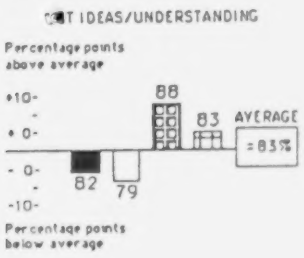
portant helps most frequently named were GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDING and FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL (by 67% and 43% respectively). No other help category was named by more than 18% of the sample as "most important helps." These results were expected based on past Sense-Making studies. The helps named as "most important" resulting from institutional interactions are usually those that respondents see as appropriate to seek at those institutions. They are important, thus, to the interaction that respondents had with the institution but only a part and sometimes only the surface part of what was going on for respondents in their own life contexts.

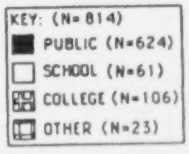
DID USERS WHO VISITED DIFFERENT KINDS OF LIBRARIES DIFFER IN HOW THEY WERE HELPED?

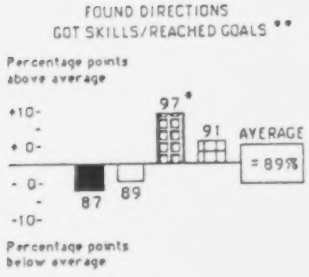
* The most important finding was that the results didn't show large differences -- the different libraries were more alike than unlike in terms of user reports of how visits to them helped.

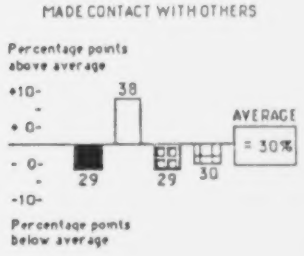
* The biggest difference was for the help GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE. Those who visited public libraries reported this help more often than those who visited other kinds of libraries.

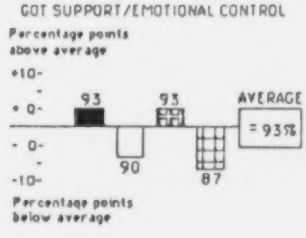
* The other modest differences met common-sense expectations. College libraries were somewhat more likely than other libraries to be used to GET IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS and to FIND DIRECTIONS/GET SKILLS/REACH GOAL. School libraries were somewhat more often used for MAKING CONTACTS WITH OTHERS, and for FEELING CONNECTED/NOT ALONE. Both college and other libraries were somewhat less often used for FEELING CONNECTED/NOT ALONE and for REST/RELAXATION.

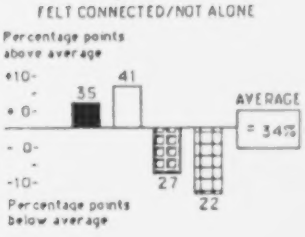


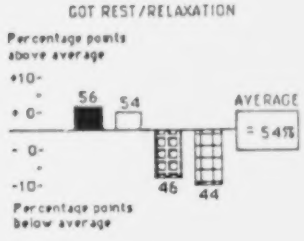


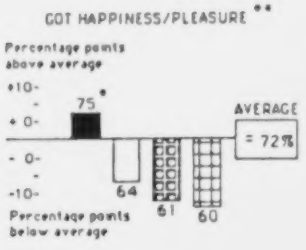












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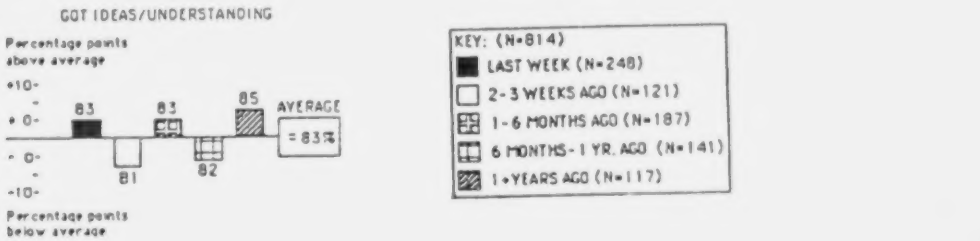
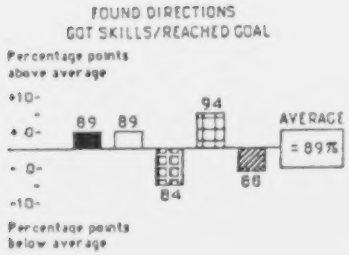
DID USERS WHO VISITED A LIBRARY MORE RECENTLY DIFFER IN HOW THEY WERE HELPED FROM THOSE WHO VISITED LESS RECENTLY?

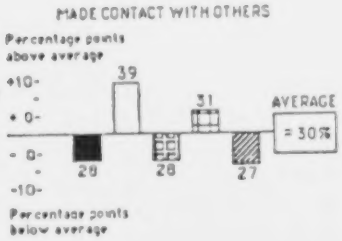
* The major finding was that users who reported their last library visits occurring at varying times differed little in their reports of how they were helped. No significant differences were found.

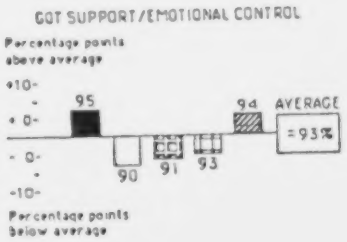
* Those reporting more recent library visits were somewhat more likely to report the GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE help. They were also somewhat less likely to report the FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE help.

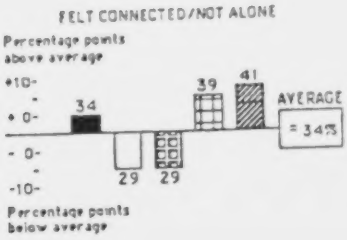
* Only two other discernible patterns emerged. Recent library visitors (2-3 weeks ago) but not the most recent (less than 1 week ago) reported somewhat more of the help MAKING CONTACT WITH OTHERS. In contrast, distant visitors (6 months to a year ago) but not the most distant (one or more years) reported somewhat more FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL.

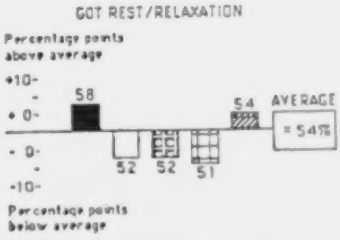


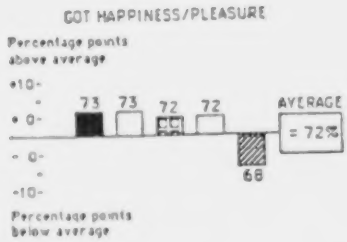












DID USERS WHO DIFFERED IN THE CONTEXT WHICH LED TO THEIR LIBRARY USE DIFFER IN HOW THEY WERE HELPED?

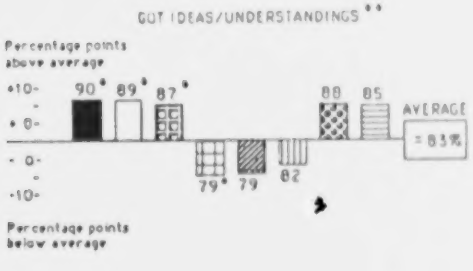
* Results showed the complexity of the link between the user's own "input" (e.g. the context of use, the reason the user went to the library in the first place) and "output" (e.g. how the user says he/she was helped). There were significant differences for each of the seven major help categories.

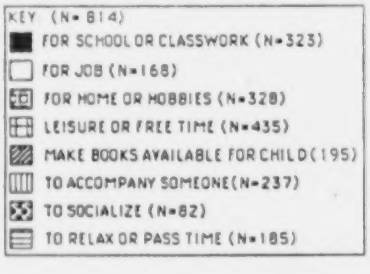
* While some large differences were found, the data also showed that any given reason for going to the library (e.g for school or job or leisure) was likely to connect to any particular help for an individual respondent.

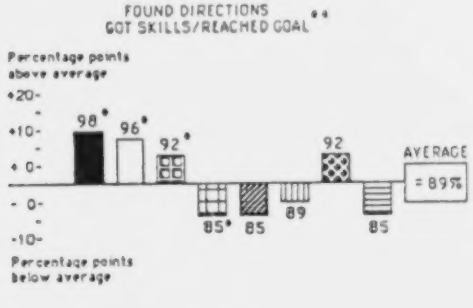
* Most of the findings met common-sense expectations. Those who said they went to the library to relax or pass time were much more likely to report as helps GOT REST/RELAXATION; GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE; and FELT CONNECTED/-NOT ALONE. Those who went to the library for school/class work or for their jobs were more likely to report GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS and FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL helps and less likely to report GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE and GOT REST/RELAXATION. In contrast, those who said they went to the library to pursue leisure or free time pursuits reversed this pattern.

* Some contexts of use obviously related to more multi-dimensional help patterns. Those who went to socialize stood out as different in this respect. Not only were they more likely to report that they were helped because they MADE CONTACT WITH OTHERS and because they FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE, they also were high namers of all other helps.

* One special finding of interest is that those who said they went to the library to make books available for a child were among the highest namers of the GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE help.




KEY (N= 814)
FOR SCHOOL OR CLASSWORK (N=323)
FOR JOB (N=168)
FOR HOME OR HOBBIES (N=328)
LEISURE OR FREE TIME (N=435)
MAKE BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR CHILD (195)
TO ACCOMPANY SOMEONE (N=237)
TO SOCIALIZE (N=82)
TO RELAX OR PASS TIME (N=185)



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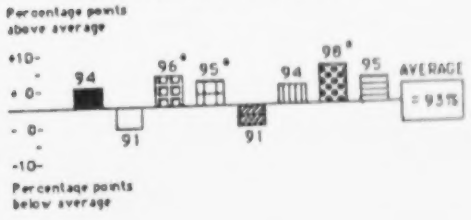
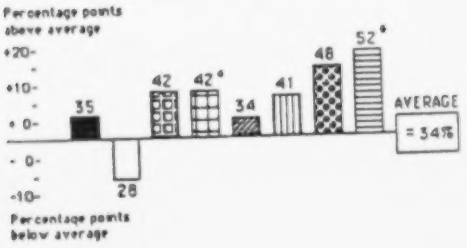
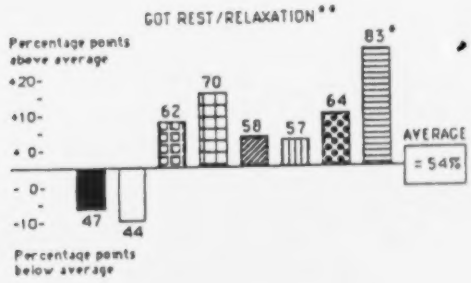
GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL**



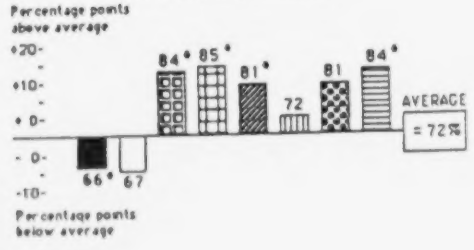
FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE**



GOT REST/RELAXATION**



GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE**



DID USERS WHO DIFFERED IN THE MATERIALS OR SERVICES THEY OBTAINED FROM THEIR LAST LIBRARY VISIT DIFFER IN HOW THEY WERE HELPED?

* Again, the pattern of the findings showed the complexity of the user's world. Significant differences were found for all seven help categories.

* While results showed some sizeable relationships between kinds of materials/services obtained and kinds of helps cited, the results also clearly showed that any given material/service could relate to any given help for a given individual respondent.

* Many of the results fit common sense expectations. Users who got fiction on their visit were more likely, for example, to report the GOT REST/RELAXATION and GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE helps. They were less likely to report the GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS and FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL helps. The opposite was true for users who reported using encyclopedias and research articles and journals, and magazines.

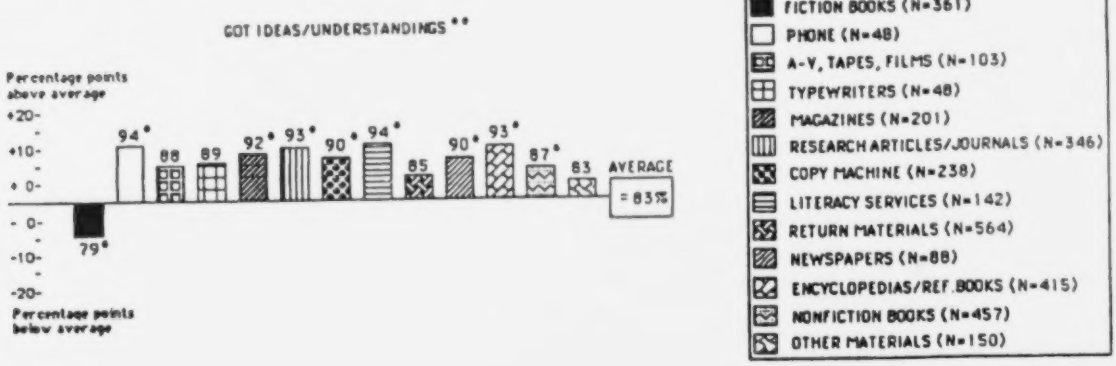
* Users who indicated they went to use the library's phone, copy machine, or typewriter were high namers of the FOUND DIRECTION/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL help along with users of a wide range of non-fiction materials (magazines, research articles, newspapers, and so on).

* Of special interest is the finding that showed that users of magazines, newspapers, and non-fiction books were also among the highest namers of the GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL help.

* Also of special interest is the finding showing that users of library literacy services were among the high namers of all helps; the highest for the help FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE; and near the top for GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS; FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL; and GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL.

* Not unexpectedly, users of phone and typewriter services were more likely to name MAKE CONTACT WITH OTHERS.

* One other finding showed that users of audio-visual services were among the high namers of GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE.



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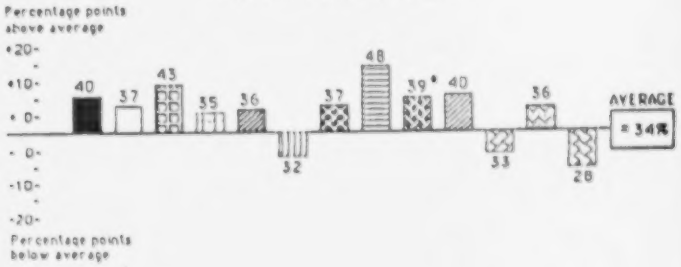
FOUND DIRECTIONS
GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOALS **

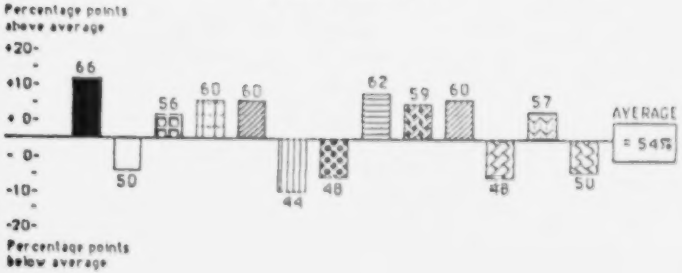
MADE CONTACT WITH OTHERS

GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL **

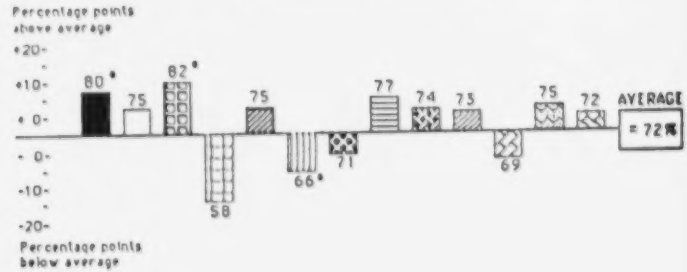
FELT CONNECTED/ NOT ALONE **



GOT REST/ RELAXATION



GOT HAPPINESS/ PLEASURE **



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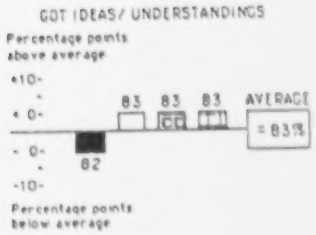
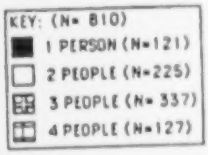
DID USERS FROM HOUSEHOLDS OF DIFFERENT SIZES DIFFER IN TERMS OF HOW THEY WERE HELPED BY THEIR LIBRARY VISITS?

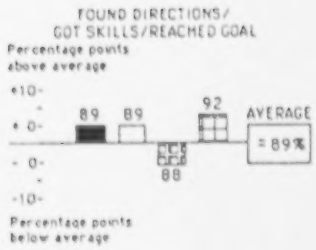
* Few differences were found between users coming from households of different sizes. No significant differences were found.

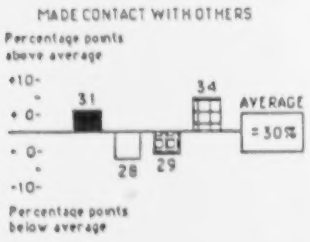
* One interesting trend in the data was a pattern showing that users from larger households (four or more people) were somewhat more likely to indicate they were helped to MAKE CONTACT WITH OTHERS and FEEL CONNECTED/NOT ALONE. In contrast, they were somewhat less likely to indicate they GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE.

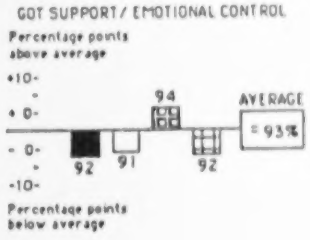
* Individuals from one person households were, on the other hand, somewhat more likely to indicate they GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE.

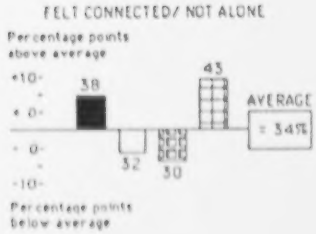


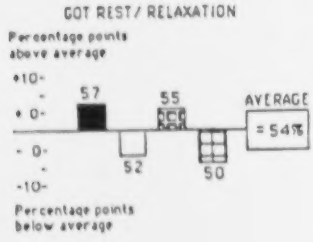


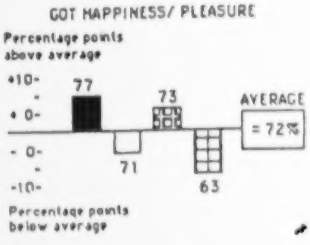












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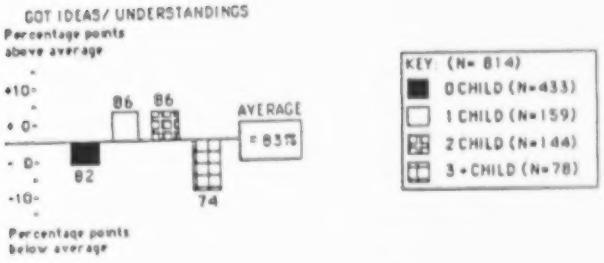
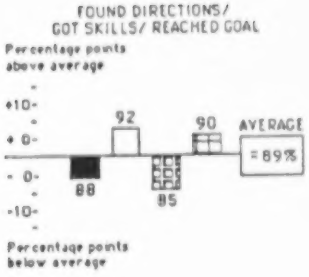
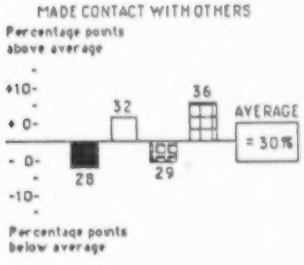
DID USERS FROM HOUSEHOLDS WITH DIFFERENT NUMBERS OF CHILDREN DIFFER IN TERMS OF HOW THEY WERE HELPED BY THEIR LIBRARY VISITS?

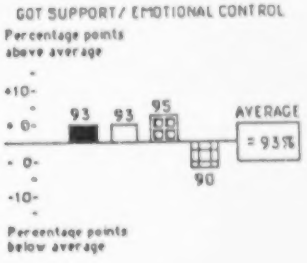
* No significant differences were found between user sub-groups based on # of children in household.

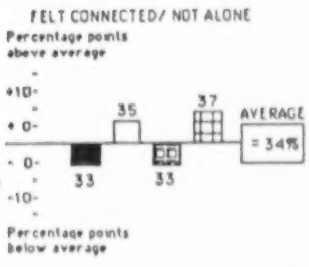
* The one major identifiable pattern isolated users from households with more children as different from other users. These users were somewhat less likely to say their last library visits helped them GET IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS, GET REST/RELAXATION, and GET HAPPINESS/PLEASURE. They were somewhat more likely to say they were helped to MAKE CONTACT WITH OTHERS.

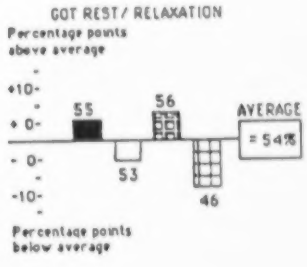


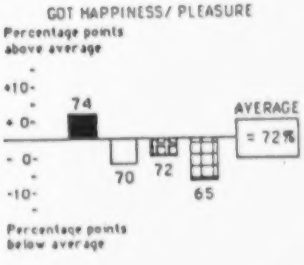












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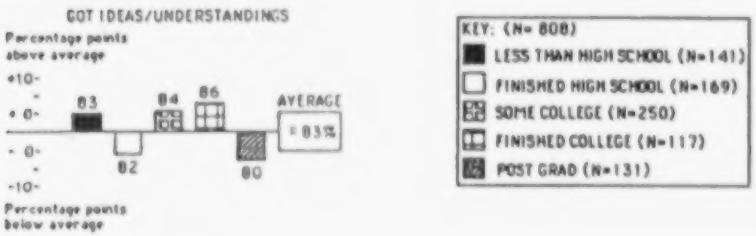
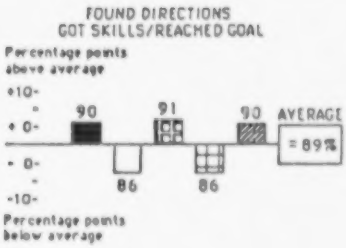
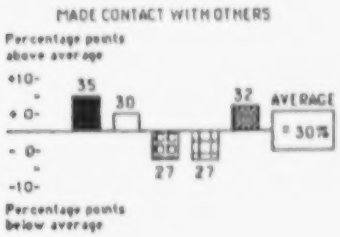
DID USERS WITH DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS DIFFER IN TERMS OF HOW THEY WERE HELPED BY THEIR LIBRARY VISITS?

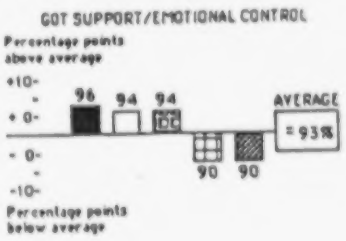
* Education was not a strong predictor of how users saw themselves helped by their last visit to a library. The primary finding showed a significant negative relationship between education and citing of the help FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE -- more educated users named this less. The same pattern, although not as strong, showed in citing of GOT REST/RELAXATION and GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL.

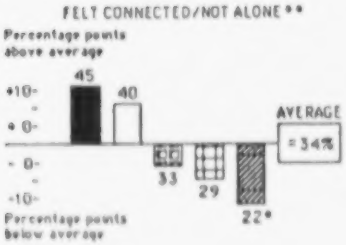
* In contrast, the opposite was true up to a point for the help GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE. More educated users were somewhat more likely to cite it except for the most educated post-graduate users who named it as infrequently as the least educated.

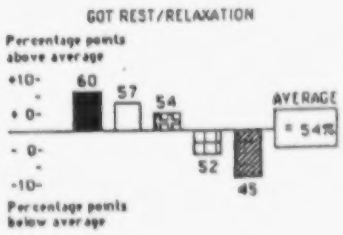


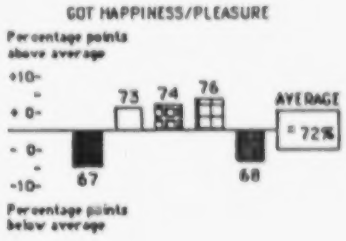












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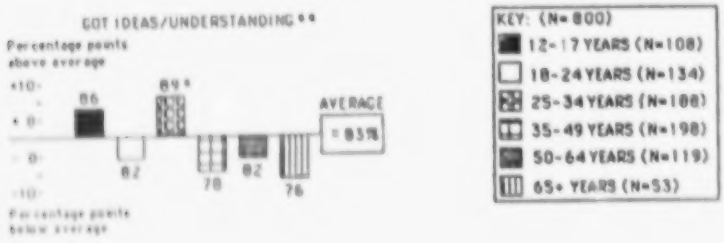
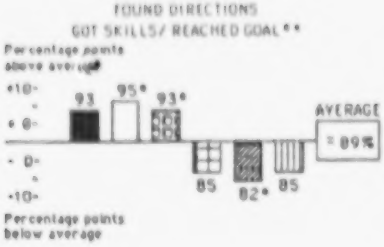
DID USERS WITH DIFFERENT AGES DIFFER IN TERMS OF HOW THEY WERE HELPED BY THEIR LIBRARY VISITS?

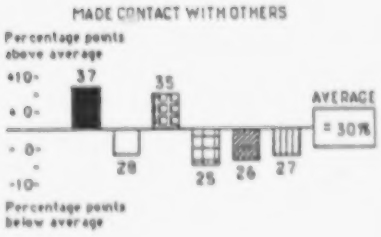
* Age of user was also not a strong predictor of what helps were named. The strongest significant finding showed that in general use of the help FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL went down as users got older. Similar patterns but not significant or as strong were found for the helps MAKE CONTACT WITH OTHERS; GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL; and GET IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS.

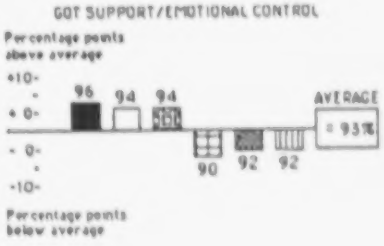
* In contrast, older respondents were somewhat more likely to name GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE and GOT REST/RELAXATION.

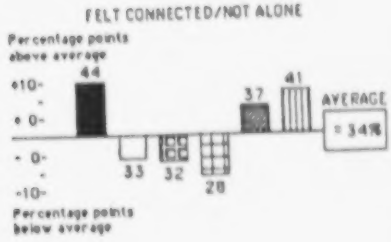
* For the help FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE, an interesting trend emerged with both the very youngest (12-17 years old) and the very oldest respondents (65 years plus) being the high namers.

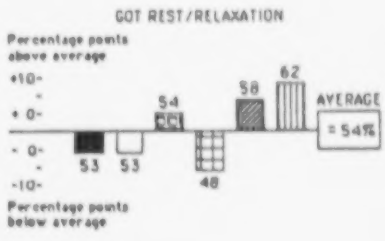


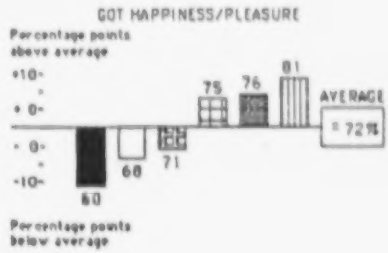












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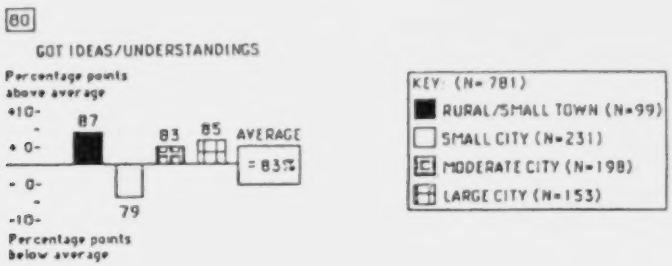
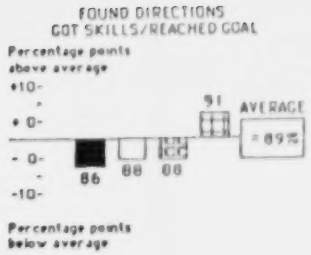
DID USERS FROM DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS DIFFER IN TERMS OF HOW THEY WERE HELPED BY THEIR LIBRARY VISITS?

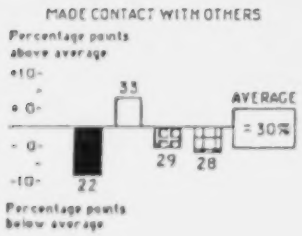
* Geographic location was a weak predictor of how library visits helped. There were no significant relationships although some trends emerged of interest.

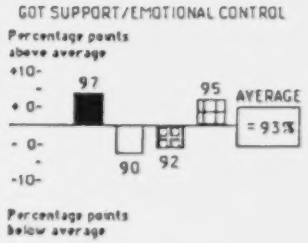
* A general pattern showed that as urbanity increased naming of two helps also tended to increase -- FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOALS and GOT REST/RELAXATION.

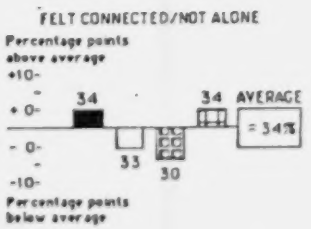
* In contrast, in a second pattern the most urban and most rural users were more alike with both putting somewhat more emphasis on GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS; GOT SUPPORT, EMOTIONAL CONTROL; FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE; and GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE.

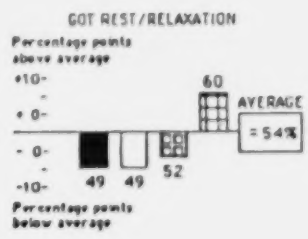


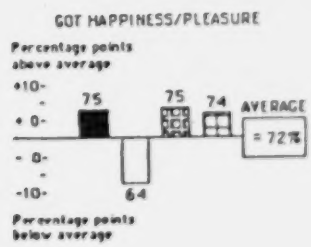












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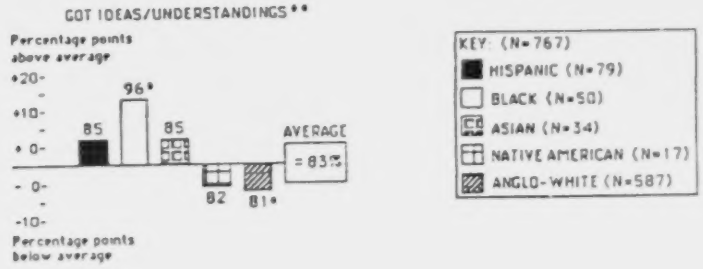
DID USERS FROM DIFFERENT RACIAL GROUPS DIFFER IN TERMS OF HOW THEY WERE HELPED BY THEIR LIBRARY VISITS?

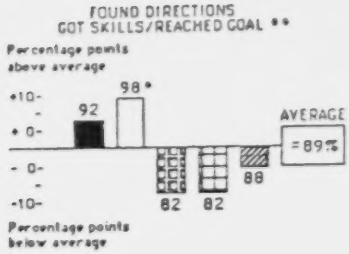
* Race was a stronger predictor than other demographic characteristics. The strongest significance patterns differentiated the Anglo-whites from the non-whites. Whites contrasted with most or all of the other racial sub-groups by citing these helps significantly less often: GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS and MADE CONTACT WITH OTHERS. They were also somewhat less likely to name FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE and GOT REST/RELAXATION. Further, the Anglo-whites showed slightly below average emphasis on all others helps except GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE. For this help, their emphasis was average.

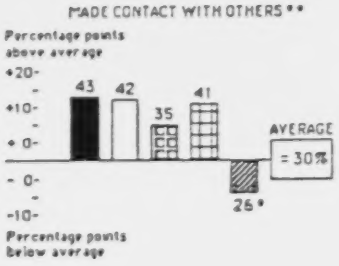
* Hispanics, Blacks, and Native Americans were the highest namers of the help MAKE CONTACT WITH OTHERS contrasting with Asians who tended to fall in the middle between these sub-groups and the Anglo-Whites.

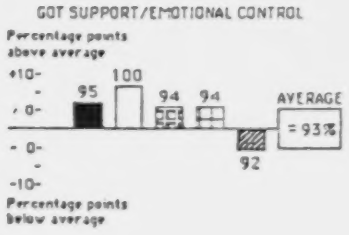
* Native Americans, on the other hand, tended to be low namers of GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE and both Asians and Native Americans tended to be low namers of FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOALS.

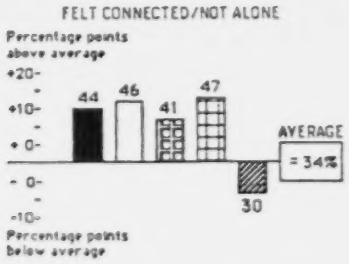
* Blacks were significantly more likely than other respondents to name GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS and FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL.

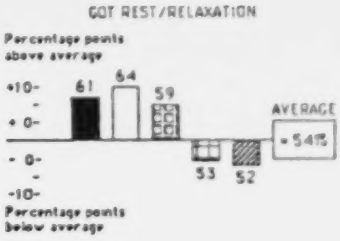


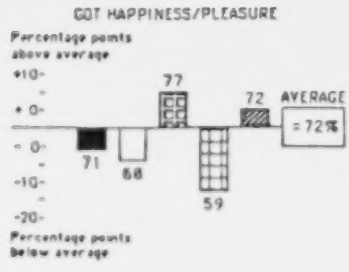












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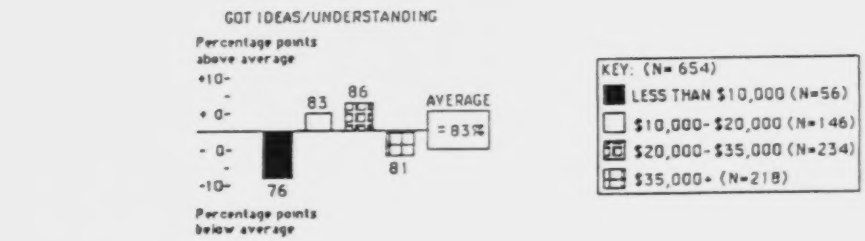
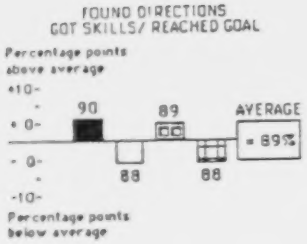
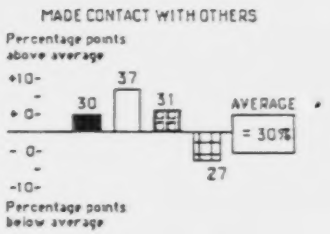
DID USERS FROM DIFFERENT INCOME GROUPS DIFFER IN TERMS OF HOW THEY WERE HELPED BY THEIR LIBRARY VISITS?

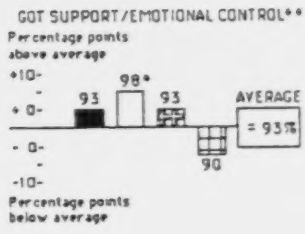
* Income was not a strong predictor of user reports of library helps although some significant trends did emerge. One clear pattern showed how the highest income group differed from others -- they were significantly less likely to name FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE and GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE HELPS and somewhat less likely to name GOT REST/RELAXATION.

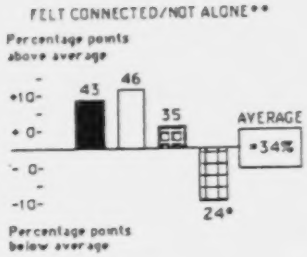
* A second pattern showed that in general as income rose citing of the help GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDING tended to rise while citing of the help GOT REST/-RELAXATION tended to fall.

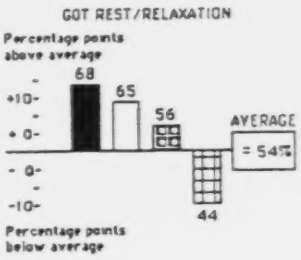


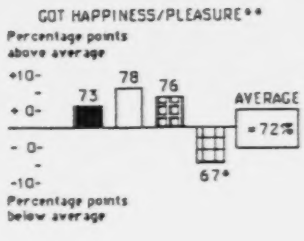












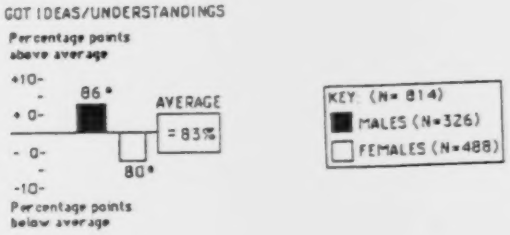
29 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

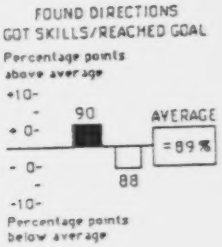
DID MALE VERSUS FEMALE USERS DIFFER IN TERMS OF HOW THEY WERE HELPED BY THEIR LIBRARY VISITS?

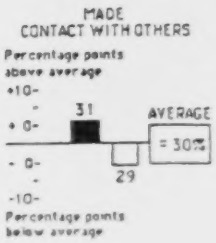
* Sex was not a strong predictor of user help statements. Only two differences large enough to mention were found.

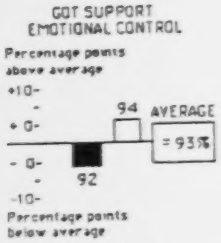
* Males were significantly more likely than females to cite the help GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS although the difference was not large.

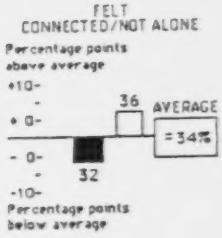
* Females, on the other hand, were somewhat more likely than males to cite the help GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE.

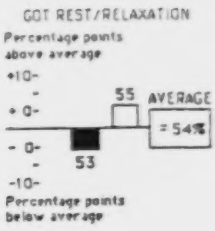


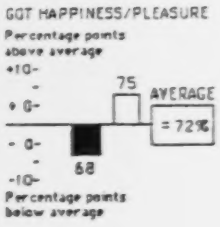












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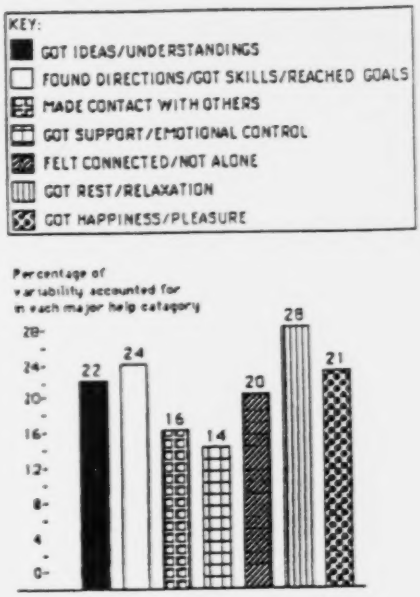
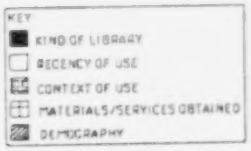
WHAT WERE THE BEST PREDICTORS OF HOW USERS WERE HELPED BY LIBRARY VISITS?

* This study compared the power of five different groups of variables in predicting how users were helped by their most recent visits to libraries. The comparisons were between kind of library visited, recency of use, context which led to use, materials/services obtained, and demographic characteristics of users.



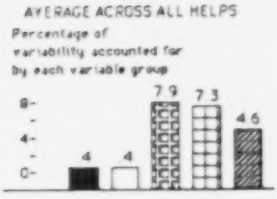
* When all the variables were used together in one statistical equation to predict the different helps, they accounted for from 14% to 28% of the variability in who named which helps. The high prediction was 28% for the help GOT REST/RELAXATION; the low was 14% for GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL.

* Knowing what kind of a library a user had visited or how recently he/she had done so was least helpful in predicting how the user was help. On the average, each of these variable groups explained less than 1% of variability.



* Knowing the context which led to the library use and the materials/services obtained was, on the other hand, most helpful. On the average, each of these variable groups explained 7-8% of variability.

* Knowing the user's demographic characteristics was somewhat helpful. On the average, demography explained 5% of the variability.



* In comparing the different kinds of predictors, then, the predictors that were most helpful were those most descriptive of the actual situation the user was involved in -- the context of that situation and the materials/services sought for that situation. This result is as expected based on the Sense-Making approach. The premises of that approach expect that variables which describe the "micro-moment" (i.e. the actual moments involved in situations) will be more powerful in predicting information seeking and use than will variables which pertain to across time-space (i.e. aspects of people or institutions which do not change from situation to situation).

COMPOSITE PORTRAITS OF USERS NAMING DIFFERENT HELPS

* The predictive power of different classes of variables differed from help to help as is shown in these composite portraits. In reading the portraits it is important to consider that in no case did a composite portrait account for more than 28% of variability and in two cases the amount was as low of 14-15%. This is like saying at best one could predict how a person would be helped by a library visit one in four times if one knew how the person could be described on all the predictive factors. Further, this analysis does not identify which factors are present in the same user. For example, the data analysis does not tell us whether the younger high namers of the help FOUND DIRECTIONS/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL are the same users as the high namers who indicated they went to the library to gain access to literacy services. The best that is possible with this data is to develop a composite portrait of what complexion of characteristics users who specified the different helps might have understanding that a given user might have one or more of the characteristics. The composite portraits are presented verbally first. Graphs follow showing the percentage of variability accounted for in each of the major help categories by the five different predictor variable classes

GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDING. The prototype user was more likely to be one who used encyclopedias, research articles, or magazines at the library and/or one who came for the library's literacy services. He/she was more likely to have come to the library for school or job related reasons and/or for home or hobbies and/or to socialize. He/she was more likely to be Black and less likely to be Anglo-white, more likely to be younger, and somewhat more likely to be male. What materials/-services he/she used predicted by far the best -- 13% of variability. Context of use and demography followed at 5% each.

FOUND DIRECTION/GOT SKILLS/REACHED GOAL. The prototype user was much like the user for GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDING: more likely to be using encyclopedias and/or research articles and/or literacy services in a school, job, or home/hobby related context and/or in a context that included socializing. Some of these prototype users also came to use specific non-material services -- the phone and copy machine. They were more likely to be Black and younger; somewhat more likely to indicate they used a college/university library. Materials/services used predicted best -- 11% of the variability; context of use predicted second best -- 8%. Demography explained 4%.

MADE CONTACT WITH OTHERS. Here the prototype user was more likely to be one who specifically came to the library to socialize or to use the phone, typewriter, or literacy services. He/she was more likely to be younger, come from a family with more children, and report having used a school library. He/she was less likely to be Anglo-white and more likely specifically to be Hispanic or Native American. Materials/services used still predicted best -- 6% of variability. However, demography and context of use followed closely with 4% each.

GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL. This user was also more likely to have reported coming to a school library to socialize and/or to get magazines, newspapers, or other non-fiction and/or to use literacy services. He/she was less likely to be Anglo-white. Of all the

helps, this one was predicted least well. Materials/services obtained still predicted best (6%), followed by demography (4%) and context of use (2%).

FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE. This user was more likely to have come to the library to relax and pass the time, to socialize, or for leisure time or home/hobby related activities and/or to use literacy services. He/she was more likely to be less educated, either in the oldest sample group or the youngest, and to have come from a larger household. He/she was less likely to be Anglo-white and more likely to be lower income and less educated. The three best predictive variable groups -- context of use; materials/services used; and demography -- all explained about the same amount of variability — 6 to 7% each.

GOT REST/RELAXATION. This user was more likely to have come to the library specifically to relax and pass time and/or to get fiction. He/she was more likely to have fewer children, be older, less educated, and more lower income. He/she was more likely to be Black and urban. Context of use was by far the best predictor -- 18% of variability explained. Materials/services was second - 6%; demography next at 4%.

GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE. This user was more likely to have come to the library to relax or pass time, to get books for children, or for home/hobby or leisure related reasons. He/she was more likely to have sought specifically fiction or a-v materials at a public library. He/she was more likely to be an older person from a one-person only household in either a rural or more urban area. He/she was less likely to be low-income or Native American.

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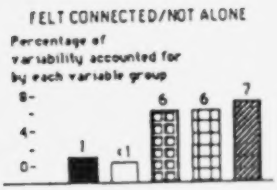
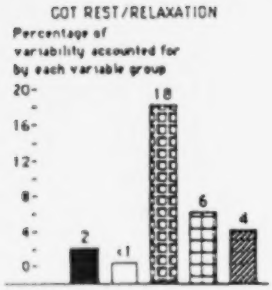
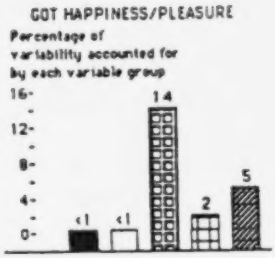

FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE
Percentage of variability accounted for by each variable group
8-
4-
0-
1
<1
6
6
7


GOT REST/RELAXATION
Percentage of variability accounted for by each variable group
20-
16-
12-
8-
4-
0-
2
<1
18
6
4


GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE
Percentage of variability accounted for by each variable group
16-
12-
8-
4-
0-
<1
<1
14
2
5

CONCLUSIONS

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS VALUE OF THE RESULTS

The preceding pages include a large number of specific findings. In all some 500 different specific analyses were performed to yield the results. But the individual findings are far less important than a general point. That general point is that this data provides confirmation of the value of looking at library use in a new way -- in terms of how it intersects with users on their own terms, in terms of how it helps users travel the roads they want to travel.

Taking the most general results as examples, it was shown that helps traditionally assumed from libraries (GOT IDEAS/UNDERSTANDINGS and GOT HAPPINESS/PLEASURE were important. But, some helps not traditionally applied to libraries (for example, GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL) were even more important in terms of the frequency with which users named them.

Further, it was also shown that the things that predicted how users were helped best were not library characteristics per se (e.g. kind of library) or experience with libraries (e.g. recency of use) but rather the context that led to the use and the materials/services obtained.

In essence, the data confirm the basic tenets of the Sense-Making approach. Information seeking and use are means to ends. They can be looked at as the tip of an iceberg -- the part that shows when you look at users with the eyes of the institution. When, however, you look at users using a perspective that allows users to talk within their own frameworks, underneath the tip of the iceberg lies a wealth of complexity.

The public relations value of being able to translate library service into human terms is one obvious benefit of this alternative way of looking at library use. It is one thing to tell a legislative body that a library circulated 4 million books or had 500,000 users last year. It is quite another to say that 34% of those users felt connected to others and not alone as a result of using the library...or 93% got support/emotional control.

Given such a perspective, libraries might then amplify quantitative results with appropriate individual case studies and begin to built a repertoire of appeals to the public and to appropriate officials that go beyond library-oriented concerns to people-oriented concerns. With increased competition for public dollars, libraries need a basis for translating their services into results that are meaningful. The approach described here offers possibilities.

THE DESIGN VALUE OF THE RESULTS

Beyond the public relations value is the potential design value of the approach and the specific findings. The results might be applied, for example, in the design or redesign of specific programs. If, for example, a library wishes to reach a specific sub-group of users, programs might be designed that seem more likely to offer the kinds of helps that sub-group is more likely to seek. In this study, for example:

* Young people were more likely to indicate they used the library to MAKE CONTACT WITH OTHERS.

* Users seeking literacy services were most likely to say they were helped to FEEL CONNECTED/NOT ALONE.

These examples suggest ways of marketing services but also ways of designing them so that they appeal to these helps. A young person's program might, for example, involve users in sharing information with each other about their most useful books or study approaches. Or, it might introduce them to the concept of networking and teach them how to make contact with people outside their immediate day-to-day circles. A literacy program might specifically build in materials and programs in which users meet others involved in literacy training.

These are but a few examples of the possibilities. Readers interested in specific kinds of programs or specific kinds of users can use the table of contents on the inside cover page to find the set of findings most relevant to their own interests. A group of readers of similar interests could then brainstorm possible implications for program design and marketing from the findings.

The findings have design potential in one other sense as well -- in terms of the procedures used by librarians for interacting with the public. These data show clearly, as have results in past Sense-Making studies, that users are actively constructing their own sense of their intersections with libraries. While there is a certain level of predictability in what users are doing with their library visits, the results have shown that this predictability is not greater than 30% even with the improvement brought to the predictive power by the use of user-oriented approaches. Further, the aspects which predict best are not things that can be known about users in advance. Rather, what predicts best is the specific purposes users have in the situations which led them to the library.

In essence, then, the findings remind us that the behaviors which occur in library settings are here-and-now behaviors that users are constructing as they move. People get stopped in their here-and-now situations. Sometimes these stops lead them to libraries where as users they continue to construct sense as they attempt to get from the library whatever it is that they see as potentially helpful.

Since very little can be known in advance about what will really be helpful to the user, librarians need procedures for interacting with users that let users talk in their own terms in the same sense that the questionnaire procedures in this study did so. One example of such a procedure is the "Neutral Questioning" approach to the reference interview developed by Dervin which requires that librarians ask users what led them to have their reference question and what helps they hope to get from the answer.

Good librarians have always developed useful procedures of this sort as individuals. However, the literature clearly shows that user-oriented procedures are rarely formalized as part of library and information system design. What these study results suggest is that use of such procedures needs to be formalized and institutionalized so that libraries can be more

inherently responsive to users in their here-and-now situations rather than relying almost solely on the skills of individually talented librarians to rise above institutional constraints.

THE QUESTION RAISING VALUE OF THE RESULTS

Beyond the public relations and design potential of the approach and results, this study has suggested myriad individual findings which enlarge our vision of what library users are about and raise questions for us to consider both in further research and in the day to day practice of librarianship. Some examples include:

*What is going on for users of library literacy services that they stand out from other users as more likely to report a wide variety of helps and specifically to report the helps FELT CONNECTED/NOT ALONE and GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL?

*What is going on with users who say they come to the library to socialize and then end up reporting a wide variety of helps -- FINDING DIRECTION/GETTING SKILLS/REACHING GOAL -- in addition to being able to make contact?

* Why is it that users who reported they used magazines and newspapers were also among the higher namers of the GOT SUPPORT/EMOTIONAL CONTROL help?

* Why is it that Anglo-whites name fewer helps from their library uses but are more likely to be library users?

In essence, then, the results force us to raise questions which need to be asked about what is really going on for users when they intersect with libraries and what is going on for non-users that keeps them away. Traditional attempts to ferret out this question have looked at users and non-users through institutional eyes and have, thus, been unable to enter into the lifestreams that lead people either to or away from libraries.

In the context of the extreme complexities of human behavior, any study is most useful when it leads both practitioner and researcher to raise questions which change the kinds of observations they make and, ultimately change thinking about institutional purposes and structures.